



DNR

South Carolina Alligator Hunting Guide



SCDNR File Photo

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries Division

Wildlife Section - Special Projects

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South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries Division Wildlife Section

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Preface

This booklet was developed to provide basic information regarding the alligator hunting season and what hunters will need in order to familiarize themselves with taking alligators. It includes common hunting techniques, safety tips, how to harvest an alligator, requirements for processing an alligator, and how to care for an alligator hide.

For additional information, visit www.dnr.sc.gov or contact the nearest SCDNR Regional Office listed below:

Region I	Clemson (864) 654-1671
Region II	Florence (843) 661-4768
Region III	Columbia (803) 734-3886
Region IV	Charleston (843) 953-9300

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources for allowing us to modify their alligator booklet for use in South Carolina. We also express our appreciation to biologists with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for the use of information from their "Public Waters Alligator Harvest Training and Orientation Manual" in the preparation of this book. SCDNR also thanks Texas Parks and Wildlife Department © 2002 for the use of the artwork found on page 16.

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INTRODUCTION

Hunters interested in participating in South Carolina's Public Alligator Harvest Program should go online to www.dnr.sc.gov and apply to take part in the upcoming alligator hunting season. The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR or SCDNR) is tasked with the conservation of the state's alligator population, and through its alligator project, several alligator management programs are available. The Alligator Depredation Permit Program focuses on providing property owners a mechanism to be able to deal with individual problem alligators on their property on a year 'round basis. The Private Lands Harvest Program issues harvest quotas to property owners with large areas of alligator habitat to provide means to manage alligator populations. The Private Lands Harvest Program was initiated in 1995 to provide an alligator hunting season on larger properties to allow the selective removal and utilization of alligators from these areas.

The Public Alligator Harvest Program allows anyone to participate in the alligator harvest. Residents and nonresidents are allowed to participate, but all the participants must possess a current SC hunting license. Prior to the alligator hunting season, hunters are selected through an online quota application system and random selection process. Each applicant is required to apply online at www.dnr.sc.gov and pay a \$10 nonrefundable application fee. If selected, a \$100 permit fee is required to purchase the permit and harvest tag. The alligator hunting season is integral to the conservation of the American alligator in South Carolina, adds to the value of the animal and allows hunters to benefit from this sustainable and renewable natural resource.

All fees from the alligator hunting program are retained by DNR, and by law are applied to the research and management of the alligator resource in South Carolina.



Ted Borg, SCDNR

ALLIGATORS IN SOUTH CAROLINA: HISTORY & BIOLOGY

HISTORY

The American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*), a reptile, is a member of the Family Alligatoridae. Alligator populations reached their lowest levels in the early 1960's due to several factors. However, management and conservation actions by state and federal governments was required by the Endangered Species Act (ESA) allowed the alligator population to increase. They were removed from "total protection" status under the ESA in 1987. The alligator is now listed as "threatened by similarity of appearance" because of its likeness to other protected crocodilians worldwide. This provides greater flexibility for South Carolina and other southeastern states to manage alligator populations. At least 100,000 alligators occur in the state of South Carolina.

RANGE

Alligators occur from the southern tip of Texas to the northeastern part of North Carolina. In South Carolina, they are typically found south of the fall line (which roughly traverses the state from I-20 in Aiken to Kershaw County, then up highway US 1 towards Cheraw in Chesterfield County). There is no evidence that alligator populations reproduce north of the fall line, and it is suspected that many of the alligators found above the fall line may have been illegally relocated. A very small number of individual alligators naturally show up in these areas. Alligators usually remain in the area where they were hatched for two to three years before establishing their own range. Females generally have small home ranges, while males may occupy a home territory of more than two square miles. Severe drought or flood conditions may cause alligators to move considerable distances in search of suitable waters.

HABITAT

Alligators occupy a variety of wetland habitats in South Carolina. They normally are found in marshes, swamps, rivers, farm ponds and lakes in the wild, but also have been found in ditches, neighborhoods, drainage canals, retention ponds, roadways, golf course ponds and sometimes in swimming pools. Nearly any water body in the Lowcountry has the potential to harbor alligators at one time or another. During courtship and breeding, from April to May, alligators prefer open waters. During the remainder of the year, males prefer open and deep waters while females seek out nesting habitat in secluded areas with shallow water and heavy vegetation.

BIOLOGY

Alligators can live up to 60 years in captivity, but in the wild they rarely live more than 50 years. Male alligators can presumably grow up to 16 feet in length, although 13-footers are rare, whereas female alligators can grow up to 10 feet. After breeding, females lay an average of 35 to 40 eggs that incubate for about 65 days. Hatchlings are about eight to ten inches in length. About 20 percent of the young will survive to maturity, the others fall victim to predators such as raccoons, birds, snakes, otters and other alligators. They grow approximately eight to ten inches per year for the first few years and will reach sexual maturity at about six to seven feet in length. Large alligators can reach weights of over 800 pounds. Alligators are carnivores and will eat almost anything they can catch. During the first few years their diet consists mainly of small prey such as snails, crayfish, frogs, insects and other invertebrates. Depending on their size, larger alligators may eat fish, turtles, snakes, waterbirds, raccoons, beavers and otters. Alligators also feed on carrion and, given the opportunity, they may also eat pets and smaller domestic animals, such as goats and pigs.

BENEFITS

Alligators are ecologically important. They help maintain the population balance of certain prey species and they help shape and modify habitat. During times of severe drought, alligators are known to dig holes (gator holes) to concentrate water. This helps the alligator survive, and provides a water source to many other species of plants and animals in the area.

HUMAN-ALLIGATOR CONFLICTS

In 1989, the SCDNR initiated a problem alligator program that allows contracted agent trappers to capture and harvest specific problem alligators greater than four feet in length. A nuisance alligator is one that exhibits aggressive behavior toward humans or domestic animals, has become habituated to people, shows symptoms of some debilitating illness or injury, or inhabits recreational waters intended primarily for swimming. Agent trappers harvest approximately 350 problem alligators annually in South Carolina.

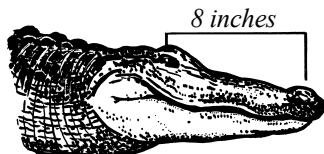
ESTIMATING ALLIGATOR LENGTH

The length of an alligator can be estimated by determining (in inches) the distance between the center of the skull (between the eyes) and the nostrils. This number then can be translated into feet to give an estimate

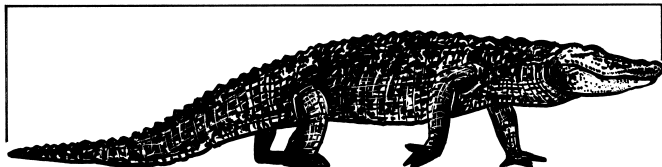
of the entire length of the animal. For example, if the measurement on the top diagram was eight inches, one can estimate that the entire animal is approximately eight feet long.

Estimating Alligator Length:

The length of an alligator can be estimated by determining the length (in inches) between the center of the skull (between the eyes) and the nostrils. This number gives the approximate length of the alligator in feet. For example, if the measurement on the diagram to the right was eight inches, one can estimate that the entire animal is approximately 8 feet long.



8 Feet



Artwork courtesy of GADNR

HUNT APPLICATION PROCESS

South Carolina's alligator hunting season has been designated as a quota hunt where a limited number of hunters are allowed to harvest one alligator (4 feet or greater in length) each from a specified hunt unit. This allows the Department to monitor and manage the number of animals harvested. Hunters must apply electronically over the internet (www.dnr.sc.gov) by 11:59 p.m. on July 15. There is a \$10 nonrefundable application fee to apply. When applying, hunters select (in order of preference) their preferred hunt unit. There are four alligator management units and an initial allotment of 250 permits per unit (1,000 total). Hunters will be selected to hunt in only one unit. This number may change in future years based on harvest levels and alligator survey information. Potential applicants may visit the SCDNR website (www.dnr.sc.gov) to check for the current year's alligator permit allotment.

A random computer drawing will select the applicants for each hunt unit. Each selected applicant may hunt only the area for which they were chosen and may harvest only one alligator. All applicants must be 16 or older at the time of the hunt to be eligible for an alligator harvest permit. The selected hunter may have as many assistants or helpers as desired. Selected hunters will receive this booklet, an alligator harvest permit

and alligator harvest tag by mail. Permits and tags are not transferable and must be in possession while hunting. Hunters not selected for a hunt will have their quota hunt account credited with a preference point. Preference points may be used with future applications to receive priority status in the selection process. All preference points will be forfeited if an applicant fails to apply in any year in which they carry any preference points. Applicants will continue to accumulate preference points until selected to participate in the alligator hunt. Once selected, all preference points revert to zero.

HUNTERS MUST APPLY ONLINE AT WWW.DNR.SC.GOV

PREPARING FOR THE HUNT

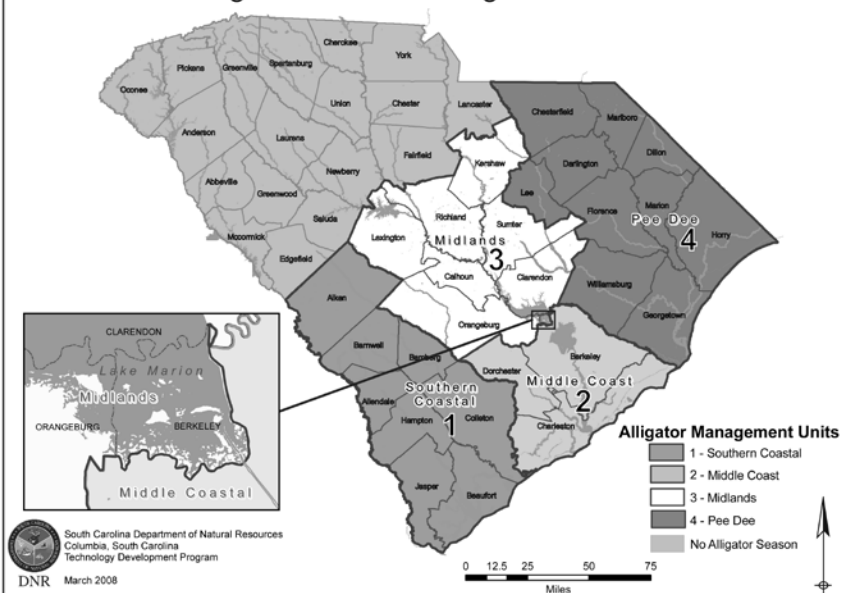
LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

A license is not required to apply for the Public Alligator hunt; however, in addition to an alligator hunting permit, all selected hunters must possess a valid SC hunting license before participating in the alligator hunting season. Persons accompanying a permitted alligator hunter and actively participating in the hunt (i.e. operating the boat, holding a spotlight or otherwise assisting in the search, capture or dispatch of an alligator) must possess a SC hunting license. Persons under 16 may accompany a permitted alligator hunter and are not required to possess a hunting license.

PRE-HUNT TIPS

- Familiarize yourself with the information contained in this booklet.
- Make plans to attend one of the pre-season voluntary training sessions on alligator capture, dispatch and handling methods. Visit www.dnr.sc.gov or call (803) 734-3609 for more information on available classes.
- Purchase your hunting equipment and become familiar with it in advance.
- Obtain maps of the zone you will hunt and familiarize yourself with the area.
- Determine who will accompany you for the hunt (i.e. select a guide if desired) and ensure that everyone has appropriate licenses. Determine who will handle each responsibility during the course of the hunt (i.e. drive the boat, snare, dispatch, etc.).

Alligator Season Management Units



- If you plan to hunt on private property, it is recommended that you obtain written permission from the landowner to be on the property and have it in your possession while hunting.
- Develop a plan on how you are going to cool the alligator as quickly as possible once it is harvested.
- Keep your hunting permit and tag in a safe place. Replacements **cannot** be issued.

AREAS OPEN TO HUNTING

In each alligator management unit, hunters are allowed to hunt in the navigable public waters of the state that are normally open to public hunting. Hunters are also allowed to hunt on private property with permission of the landowner.

AREAS NOT OPEN TO HUNTING

- Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs)
- National Wildlife Refuges and any of the jurisdictional waters surrounding these refuges not normally open for public hunting
- Any other bodies of water not normally open for public hunting
- Private lands adjacent to public waters where permission has not been granted to the hunter

HUNTING CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- ☐ Alligator hunting permit, alligator harvest tag and state hunting license.
- ☐ Permission from landowner if hunting on private land.
- ☐ Boat and required equipment such as functioning running lights and life jackets (Please note that SCDNR encourages all hunters to wear a life jacket while in a boat).
- ☐ Lighting equipment. A light may be used.
- ☐ Preferred capture equipment: snare, gig, harpoon or arrow.
- ☐ Restraint equipment: snare for neck and snare for snout.
- ☐ Preferred dispatch equipment: handgun or bangstick.
- ☐ Knife to cut into alligator's tail to insert the temporary alligator harvest tag.
- ☐ Preferred cooling method.
- ☐ Processing plans.

ALLIGATOR CAPTURE AND HARVEST TECHNIQUES

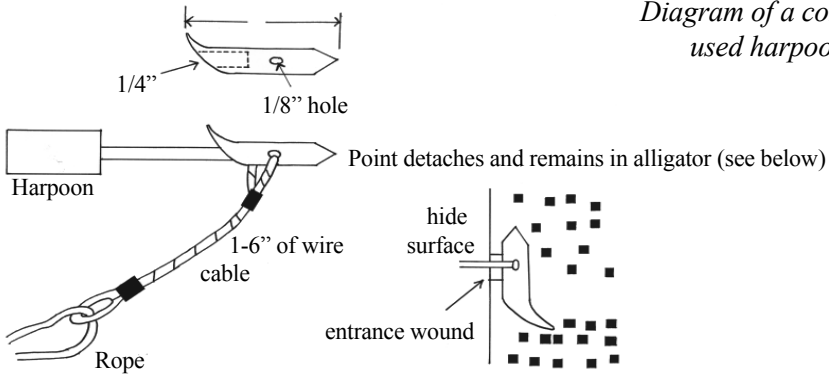
This section will discuss and review effective and legal capture and dispatch methods for harvesting an alligator.

IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTE: There are several effective techniques available for capturing and harvesting alligators. Keep in mind that while these techniques have proven effective in alligator harvests, an element of danger is involved with the process. The techniques, equipment and practices described are provided to demonstrate practical techniques that agent alligator trappers have used in conjunction with the nuisance alligator program. Hunters should be aware that many experienced agent alligator trappers, using similar techniques, have been bitten and some seriously injured. You are urged to use extreme caution when handling alligators. If you are inexperienced in handling alligators, SCDNR encourages you to obtain the assistance of an experienced guide and plan on attending one of the voluntary training and orientation sessions.

All effective alligator hunting techniques have a few common elements:

- Alligators are invariably hunted after dark (although some hunters use snatchhooks on animals during twilight hours).
- Alligators are located at night by their reflective eyeshine, which is a characteristic red glow.
- Alligators should be approached quietly keeping the beam of the spotlight directly in or just above their eyes.

Diagram of a commonly used harpoon point.



Artwork courtesy of GADNR

CAPTURE METHODS

It is unlawful to kill an unrestrained alligator during the Public Alligator Hunting Season. Alligators must first be captured alive prior to shooting or otherwise dispatching the animal. In order to capture an alligator, the hunter must first secure a restraining line to the animal. Several methods may be used to attach a restraining line to an alligator, including handheld snares, harpoons, gigs, arrows or snatch hooks. It is up to the individual hunter to decide which method will work best for their situation and skill level. Once the restraining line is attached, the alligator should be retrieved with moderate pressure applied to the line. It is important to note that pulling too hard on the restraining line will often cause it to pull loose. A snare should be cautiously attached to the alligator once it is adjacent to the boat. It is best to use a snare that has been attached to a pole with either a rubber band or a piece of tape so that it will “break-away” upon pulling the snare secure around the animal’s neck. Alligators typically thrash when the snare is applied, but should calm down after they tire from struggling.

DISPATCH METHODS

Once the alligator has been captured and brought adjacent to the boat it may be dispatched. The animal may be killed with the use of a bangstick or a handgun (any caliber). To use a bangstick, the hunter should first allow the alligator’s head to go below the water’s surface. The hunter should then discharge the bangstick at the base of the skull. The animal also may be dispatched by discharging a handgun at the base of the skull. Both the bangstick and the handgun should be aimed at the brain, angled slightly forward from the rear of the skull. Hunters should note that the improper placement and discharge of the handgun or bangstick can occasionally only knock the alligator temporarily unconscious. Remember to only discharge a bangstick underwater. Alligators **may not** be transported in a boat or vehicle alive.

NEVER ASSUME THAT ANY ALLIGATOR IS DEAD.

NOTE: No firearm, except a bangstick or handgun, may be in possession while hunting alligators.

Using the snare, carefully pull the alligator's snout up against the side of the boat (to the edge of the gunnel) and press the top of the snout closed with a stick to secure. Never place your hand or foot next to an alligator's jaw because they can snap sideways very quickly and cause serious injury. A rope (tossed or guided by a stick rather than your hand) can be used to temporarily secure the jaw. Once this temporary method is applied, the jaw should then be completely secured by wrapping it several times with high quality duct tape or electrical tape. As a final measure, the spinal cord should be severed at the base of the skull before placing the alligator in the bottom of the boat. Remember, the jaws should always remain taped shut when handling or transporting an "apparently" dead alligator.



Artwork courtesy of GADNR

CAPTURE AND DISPATCH TOOLS

Snares: Wire snares attached to a restraining line that is loosely mounted (using a small rubber band or piece of tape) to the end of a pole are most commonly used to secure the alligator once it has been harpooned or snagged and brought under control near the boat. Snares also may be used as an initial capture technique. Snares must be hand-held or attached to a hand-held device and cannot be left unattended.

Harpoons and Gigs: Harpoons or gigs may be used for attaching a restraining line to an alligator. Harpoons or gigs consist of a penetrating point such as a straightened fish hook, detachable dart, fish gig or spear point that is attached to a restraining line. The harpoon point is typically mounted on a pole, arrow shaft or spear and is thrown. A gig (a pronged instrument with a metal or wooden pole) is jabbed.

Snatch Hooks: Snatch hooks may be used for attaching a restraining line to an alligator. A snatch hook is a weighted treble hook that is attached to a restraining line. The hook is either hand-held or used in conjunction with a long, stout fishing rod and reel and heavy line. The hook typically is cast over the alligator or over the area where it last submerged. The hook is then retrieved until it makes contact with the alligator, at which point



it is set with a strong pull. The line should be kept tight until the animal tires, as the hook often falls out of the alligator if the line is allowed to go slack. *Baited hooks are not a legal capture method.*

Handgun: Any caliber handgun may be used to dispatch a captured alligator, but larger calibers are recommended. Rifles are not allowed to be used as a dispatch tool and *may not be in possession while hunting alligators*. Alligators may not be shot until captured and restrained.

Bangsticks: Bangsticks are a safe and effective tool for humanely killing alligators. Bangsticks or power heads, typically used by divers to kill fish, discharge a firearm cartridge upon contact. For a humane kill, the shot should be centered immediately behind the skull cap and angled toward the brain. It is recommended that the bangstick be used in compliance with the manufacturer's safety recommendations. When killing an alligator, the bangstick should be discharged below the waterline to reduce the potential for aerial dispersal of bullet and bone fragments. Keep in mind that to legally dispatch an alligator using a bangstick, the animal must be attached to a restraining line using methods such as those previously described.

WARNING: A bangstick is a firearm under the laws of South Carolina, and should be treated at all times with the respect due such a device. While these materials are offered to familiarize participants with the appropriate and safe use of a bangstick, SCDNR cannot warrant that such use will be safe under all circumstances, nor is this brief introduction intended as a substitute for the degree of experience and knowledge necessary to safely utilize such a device. In the event you choose to utilize a bangstick to harvest alligators, you should select a model, which the manufacturer deems appropriate for such use, and should, at all times, comply with manufacturer's safety recommendations and specifications for use.

AVAILABILITY OF CAPTURE AND DISPATCH TOOLS

Bangsticks and/or other equipment:

- Bud's Bangsticks (772) 468-7711/www.bangsticks.com
- Beco Products (800) 720-1905/www.beco-products.com
- Central Florida Trophy Hunts (321) 632-8995/
www.centralfloridatrophyhunts.com
- Gator Guides (813) 968-6154/
www.gatorguides.com/ratworks.htm
- Jeff Leserra Enterprises/www.huntinglight.com

Snares:

- R-P Outdoors (800) 762-2706/www.rpoutdoors.com
- Snare One (866) 695-7401/www.snareone.com
- The Snare Shop (712) 792-0600/www.snareshop.com

Note: *Alligator hunting equipment also may be available from your local outdoor sporting goods store or from other online vendors.*

Disclaimer: The above vendor listing is provided to allow convenient access to equipment sought by those interested in alligator hunting. SCDNR neither endorses these companies nor receives any compensation for placing these names in this booklet. Equipment purchased through these companies is done so at the buyer's own risk and of their own will.

WHAT TO DO AFTER YOUR ALLIGATOR IS HARVESTED

After the alligator is harvested, you must be prepared to do the following:

- Attach the harvest tag to the alligator's tail.
- Complete the harvest permit within 24 hours of taking the animal.
- Cool the harvested alligator.
- If CITES validation is desired you must make prior arrangements with a SCDNR Regional Office at least 24 hours in advance of the need for the tag.

ATTACHING THE HARVEST TAG

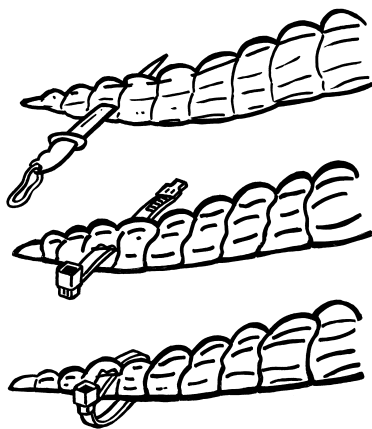
You must attach the alligator harvest tag to the alligator carcass within six (6) inches of the tip of the tail (see diagram to the right) immediately after it is killed and before it is transported by boat or vehicle from the site of capture. The harvest tag must remain attached to the alligator hide at all times. Please note, it is difficult to cut through an alligator's hide, so take your time and be careful not to cut yourself. Also, be sure to clamp your harvest tag across the underside of the tail to avoid jeopardizing the ability to skin the hide.

COMPLETING THE HARVEST PERMIT

The alligator harvest permit must be completed within 24 hours of harvesting the alligator. A copy of the alligator harvest permit must accompany the alligator hide at all times. Please be sure to read and follow the directions carefully and fill the permit out completely.

COOLING THE HARVESTED ALLIGATOR

To maintain meat and hide quality, take necessary steps to cool your harvested alligator to 45 degrees Fahrenheit within four (4) hours after harvest.



Attaching the Harvest Tag

Artwork courtesy of GADNR

VALIDATING HIDES FOR CITES TAGS*

Arrangements must be made in advance for hunters desiring to obtain a CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) tag. Because the American alligator is *similar in appearance* to some endangered Crocodillians, the US Fish & Wildlife Service requires all alligator hides destined for export from the United States to be tagged with a state-issued CITES tag. All alligator carcasses or hides needing a CITES tag shall be taken during normal working hours (M-F, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. – some locations may vary so you should call first) to a SCDNR Regional Office (locations and phone numbers listed on front cover of booklet), or other designated location, for CITES validation no later than October 20. Prior notification is required and an appointment must be scheduled in advance. The harvest tag must remain locked onto the alligator's tail until validation. CITES tags issued by SCDNR must remain attached to the hide until it is tanned, taxidermy mounted or exported from the state. The possession of any untagged alligator hide (without either a harvest tag or a CITES tag) is prohibited.

****PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS FOR CITES TAGS MUST BE MADE BY APPOINTMENT WITH A DNR OFFICE.***

SKINNING, PROCESSING, CURING AND TANNING

SKINNING

Skinning an alligator is a delicate process if the hunter wishes to retain the beauty of the hide. Patience and special care must be taken to prevent accidental knife cuts in the hide.

Note: Scutes or osteoderms are the bony plates embedded in the back skin of an alligator. They give the alligator the bumpy appearance and protect the alligator. Alligators may be skinned in two different ways:

Method 1

This method leaves the belly skin of the alligator intact and is the preferred method if the hide is to be sold or tanned and made into leather goods. This method consists of making an incision on each side of the alligator (leaving one to two rows of osteoderms or scutes along the belly side) and on the top of each leg and then removing the hide with the belly skin intact.

The underside of the skull also should be skinned with the rest of the belly. The back skin of the alligator with the osteoderms or scutes in it can then be removed and discarded or kept according to your wishes. Because of the difficulty of tanning the osteoderms, the back skin is not considered very useful and most often is discarded.

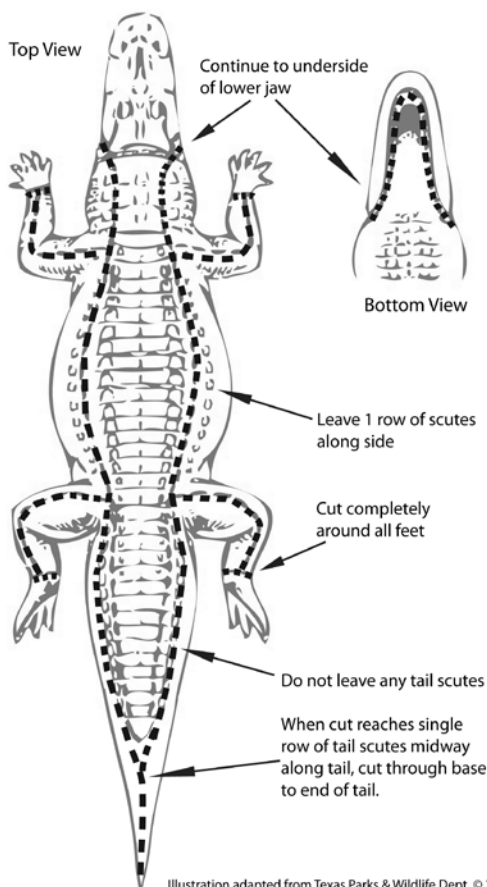


Illustration adapted from Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept. © 2002 and American Tanning & Leather Co.

Method 2

This method produces a more natural looking hide but generally is more costly to tan due to the osteoderms remaining in the hide. This method is similar to skinning a deer or a hog by making an incision up the belly of the alligator and on the underside of each leg. The hide can then be removed in its entirety and saved for tanning or selling.

Note: Alligator skulls and skeletal parts not discarded must be permanently marked with the alligator harvest tag number of the hide from which it was taken. This marking may be written on the palate of the mouth after preservation. The skull and skeletal parts may be kept by the selected hunter, transferred or sold. Records must be kept indicating to whom skulls and/or other skeletal parts were transferred.

Note: *A tannery may require a CITES tag in order to process an alligator hide.*

PROCESSING

Alligator meat may be processed and stored in a fashion similar to that for deer, hog and other game animals. While the tail meat is the most popular consumable meat of alligators, it is not the only edible portion. Many people find the ribs, legs, etc. very good. All packages of alligator meat transferred, transported, or stored, must be labelled “SC Alligator” and have the harvest tag number prominently displayed on each package

PROCESSORS

Anyone can process alligators for personal use. Alligator meat taken under the public harvest program cannot be sold.

Note: SCDNR recommends that alligator meat be processed at an approved processing facility. Approved facilities are required to meet the same standards as seafood processors and are inspected and regulated by the SC Department of Agriculture.

RECOMMENDED CONSUMPTION GUIDANCE FOR WILD ALLIGATOR

In conjunction with the limited harvest of alligators, the SCDNR is issuing recommendations on the consumption of wild alligator meat. Alligators are long-lived, may grow to large sizes, and may accumulate significant amounts of mercury. Information on mercury in alligators harvested in South Carolina is limited, but suggests that certain people may be at risk if consumption of alligator meat occurs.

SCDNR has carefully reviewed this information, and recommends that the general population eat no more than 1 meal per week (8 ounces or ½ pound) of alligator meat. Pregnant women, nursing mothers, and young children may be especially sensitive to the effects of mercury. For this potentially sensitive population, SCDNR recommends that no more than 1 meal per month be consumed. This recommendation may be particularly important if you are a frequent consumer of locally caught fish, which also may contain mercury. For further information, contact the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) Bureau of Water Division at (803) 898-4300.

TAXIDERMY AND TANNING

If you wish to have the alligator mounted, contact one of the many commercial taxidermists in the state for assistance. If you wish to tan the alligator hide, contact American Tanning and Leather Co. in Griffin, Georgia. They are one of only two alligator tanning companies in the U.S. and can provide assistance on color selection, hide preparation, etc. For more information, visit their website at www.amtan.com or call 770-228-4433.

Note: *A tannery may require a CITES tag in order to process an alligator hide.*

CURING

Two methods may be used to temporarily preserve and/or cure alligator skin until sold or sent to a tannery. Method one is through repeated salting of the hide and storing it in a cool, dry location. Method two (which utilizes some similar techniques to method one) is through the use of a brine solution.

Method 1

After an alligator has been skinned, the hide should be scraped thoroughly using a knife, a piece of metal pipe or another appropriate object until all bits of meat, fat, etc. are removed. After scraping, salt the hide with approximately one inch of white, fine grade table or mixing salt (available at most feed and seed stores). Thoroughly rub the salt into the hide, then roll the hide tightly, secure it and store it in a cool place. After 3-5 days, unroll the hide, discard the salt and repeat the salting procedure as described above. Re-roll the hide tightly and band with a one-inch rubber band or other rubber tubing. Store the rolled hide in a cool, dry place until transported for validation.

Method 2

An alternative to Method One is to utilize a brine solution. Hides cured in brine solutions often remain more supple, suffer less shrinkage and are viewed as more attractive by hide graders and buyers. For these reasons, the use of a brine solution to cure an alligator hide is highly recommended.

Ingredients or Materials Needed:

- 50 gallon covered plastic drum
- 50 pounds salt
- 1 pint bleach (assists in keeping bacterial growth to a minimum)
- 25 gallons water

In order to be effective, the solution must be carefully prepared and maintained. A plastic or other non-corrosive covered container of

sufficient size should be used. Heavy, 50-gallon plastic drums used for shipping produce are best, but large plastic covered garbage cans are good substitutes. The solution must remain saturated with salt. Too little salt will cause damage to a hide. Fill the 50-gallon container half-full of water, then add the salt and the bleach and mix thoroughly. After complete mixing, a 2-3 inch layer of salt should remain on the bottom. Hides should be properly scraped and salted with a one-inch layer of salt, tightly rolled and secured with a rubber band prior to placing in the brine. When submersing a hide in the brine, it should be rotated to allow most of the air pockets to escape. If properly salted, the layer of salt in the rolled skin will act as a wick to draw the brine solution throughout the skin. The hide should be entirely submersed in the brine at all times and the container should be kept tightly covered to keep insects and airborne contaminants from entering the solution. The hide should remain in the brine solution until sold or sent to a tannery. If you plan on selling the hide, it must be removed from the brine and entirely re-salted prior to being shipped or placed in refrigeration. The brine should be discarded and a new solution made after each use. Disposal of the salt brine should be done properly and carefully since it is harmful to plants and aquatic animal life.

SUGGESTED TIMELINE FOR YOUR HUNT

As with other hunting excursions, there are many details to consider when embarking on an alligator hunt. SCDNR has put together the following suggested time line to help you review what, when and how these details should be handled:

- Apply online at www.dnr.sc.gov by 11:59 p.m. on July 15. You can apply online annually beginning on May 1st.
- Hunters will be notified by July 31 of their application status.
- If selected, determine who will accompany you and ensure that each member of the hunting party has a valid SC hunting licenses.
- Determine which voluntary training session you and members of your hunting party will attend.
- Adequate preparation is needed to ensure proper knowledge of hunting location and possession of equipment needs.
- Restrain, capture and harvest your alligator.
- Once harvested, attach the temporary alligator harvest tag within six inches of the tip of the tail.
- Complete the alligator harvest permit within 24 hours of harvest.
- Cool the alligator within four hours of harvesting.

- Schedule an appointment with a SCDNR Regional Office during business hours (M-F, 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.) for CITES validation, if desired, no later than October 20. Office locations and numbers are listed in the front of this booklet. Arrangements for CITES tag validation at other SCDNR Wildlife Section field offices may be possible with prior notification.

Prior arrangements with a SCDNR Office must be made in order to obtain CITES validation tags.

SALE OR TRANSFER OF ALLIGATOR PRODUCTS

Alligator meat from animals taken under the Public Harvest Program cannot be sold or bartered. Any meat given to others must be clearly labeled “SC Alligator” with the corresponding harvest tag number.

Alligator hides and parts taken under the Public Alligator Harvest Program can be sold under the following conditions:

- Hides must be tagged with either a CITES or SC Harvest tag before being sold, transferred, bartered or given to another person. *Prior arrangements with a SCDNR Office must be made in order to obtain CITES validation tags.* Most tanneries or hide buyers may require a CITES tag in order to process or purchase an alligator hide.
- Alligator parts (skulls, claws, etc.) must be permanently labeled or marked “SC Alligator” with the corresponding alligator harvest tag number.



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The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, disability, religion or age. Direct all inquiries to the Office of Human Resources, PO Box 167, Columbia, SC 29202.